1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

EDUCATION AND LITERACY. There does not seem to be any active interest in education on the part of the Kols. In most of the centres visited no Kol children were being sent to school. Of course many of the places were far from the nearest village school. In Barela, however, there is a good school, but of the 125 children of school age among the Kols only two were in this school. We asked the master about these children and he said they were below the average. There are six or seven Kols in Barela who have at one time been in school but not all of them have retained their literacy. Of this number one had read up to the seventh standard and we tried to get from him in writing some facts concerning the Kols, but his responses were very poor and did not give us the insight that we had hoped to get from him. In some places Kols say that they would send their children to school if there were such facilities at hand; but where they are actually at hand they do not take an active interest, and say they cannot afford to spend money on education. There are always one or two families, however, who seem to be interested and who make some attempt to educate their children in the primary schools. In Katni the Church Missionary Society has a school which is situated near one of the sections where Kols live and to which quite a number of Kols have gone at one time or another. There were, however, only sixteen on the list that had done credible work in the past eight years, three of whom had read through the fourth standard. In such schools there is no caste distinction, though in a few other places Kols told us that the schools made distinctions and that their children were not allowed to study with the caste children.

The Census reports reveal that as a group the Kols are among the most illiterate of the many castes and tribes. For India as a whole the report[1] shows that out of 122,695 Kols aged seven years and over there were only 301 literate persons: 290 men and 11 women. Seven of the men were reported as being literate in English. In the Central Provinces and Berar with 48,500 Hindu Kols and 10,813 Tribal Kols there were but 216 and 6 literates respectively. The proportion in the United Provinces is still less as out of 63,382 Kols only 79 were literate. The United Provinces Census Report[2] puts the Kols 89th in the order of literacy in a list of 95 tribes and castes. It is worked out in that Report that they are 0.24% literate as far as males are concerned and 0.01% for the females. In the Central India Agency out of 151,718 Kols there were 88 males and 50 females literate and two were literate in English. Outside of Rewa State it appears that

1 *Census of India*, 1931, I : 1, p. 450.
2 *Ibid.* XVIII : 2, literacy tables.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

prepare tiles in a workshop near Deori; a Barela Kol has taken up the work of a mason and bricklayer. In another family we found that members had been jungle postal-runners for three generations. In Sihora they said that their chief occupation was digging in the fields, though they also cut wood and sold grass; only one or two rented lands. At Katni we found that they were chiefly employed in the cement works, but would soon be going elsewhere, as the cement factories were in the process of closing down. In some of the villages about Katni they were found to be mostly labourers in the surrounding fields. At Kymore thousands are employed in the great cement factories; at Maihar they are mostly engaged in lime-kiln work. Near Rewa City they seem to be mostly serfs and labourers. Further north they grind sandstone for the glass works, and at Chunar in the United Provinces help to dig the rock out of the hillsides. We found a few literate Kols in Katni who had learned to read in the Church Mission School. One of these was a clerk in a warehouse at busy times of the year; the rest of the year he would do whatever he could find which often was nothing but coolie work.

THE SITUATION IN THE VILLAGES: *Land and Income*. In our visits to numerous villages we made enquiries as to the economic situation on the part of the Kols living there. A careful survey was made near Jubbulpore. Text figure 30 shows the area. Only a few Kols in the large group at Barela actually rent lands for farming purposes; either on shares or on straight rent. In Kharara Ghat the situation seems to be the opposite, for nearly every household there holds land from the *malguzar*. Money is earned on the side from the sale of wood, grass and *tendu* leaves for *biris*. In Barela a survey of thirty-nine families indicated that only three held lands, and that the total acreage so held was but 5¼ acres. Thirty families in Kharara Ghat hold 82 acres of land; in some cases taxes for the same are paid direct to the Government, while to the *malguzar* they say they pay Rs. 10 per *khandi* of wheat sown, this being considered as 1/3 the produce of the land.

Barela Kols do most of the coolie work on the roads near that place and also labour on the farms as occasion offers. All the able members of the family work and we found that on the average the family income was Rs. ten to twelve per month for this type of labour. One dealer in charcoal said that he cleared locally in Barela about Rs. 120 per year. Another Barela Kol has the custom of purchasing wood from the Gonds who bring it down from the hills near-by. This is bought for five pice, is then cut up into shorter lengths by himself

34 [text continues on middle of p. 266]

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

among the most illiterate of the land. Up till now Christian Missions have started no work among them and there has been no attempt from any quarter to give them adequate facilities and opportunities whereby they may make some cultural advancement. There is great need for the improvement of their social and economic environment.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that the Kols are indifferent or that their aspirations are dormant. There are stirrings among them, which, unfortunately, have been taken advantage of by unscrupulous people. They are seeking for religious recognition, and we have traced two attempts, one near Jubbulpore, and the other near Katni, to erect Kol "temples". In both cases wide appeals were circulated and fairly large sums of money collected. In the first case not a single stone was laid and some thousands of rupees were swindled. Near Katni they had got as far as the foundation and plinth when the funds gave out.[1] We were accompanied by five Kols to this project about which they were very enthusiastic. Our interest in it stimulated them greatly. They complained that nobody cared for Kols and that Hindus thought of them as coolies who had no self-respect; so they wanted to show the world that they are really worthy of recognition. They were very self-conscious about this matter. It was said that if they can only reveal their real spirit and show that they are truly interested in religious things, then Hindus must respect them and no longer despise them. They showed a pathetic eagerness for this recognition and were pleased with our visit. They made the claim that so far, not one person outside their own community, had shown the least concern for their welfare, and that in spite of their conscientious and earnest work, no one recognized nor knew them.

As a tribe the Kols are self-respecting and industrious. They are cheerful in disposition and greatly enjoy social fellowship. We found them open-hearted and ready to answer questions when once their confidence had been gained. Like most primitive tribes they are honest and trustworthy. That they have deep emotional feelings can be seen from their music and songs. They enjoy nothing better than a long evening of song and drum. We found but little evidence of their disobedience to the rules of the tribal codes of morality.

Taken all in all the Kols are a lovable people and as one comes into intimate contact with them he feels that much ought to be done to alleviate many of the difficulties and handicaps under which they bravely carry on.

In their case it is difficult to make recommendations for the future. For years Kols have been gradually losing their identity as an

1 See plate XXVIII.